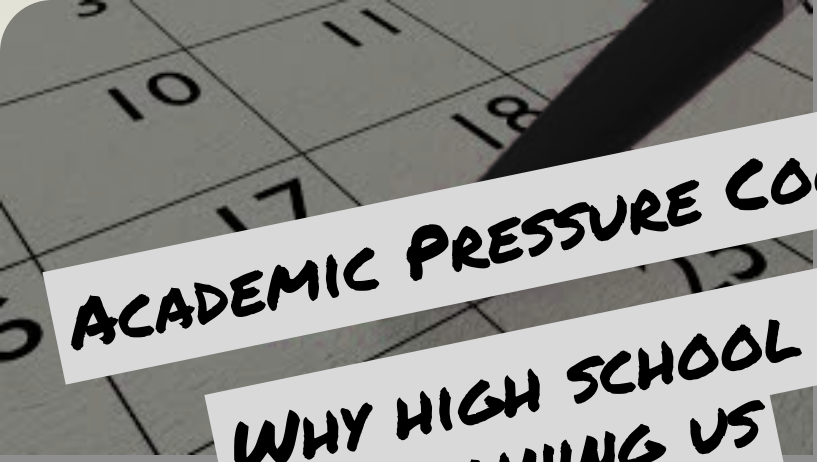
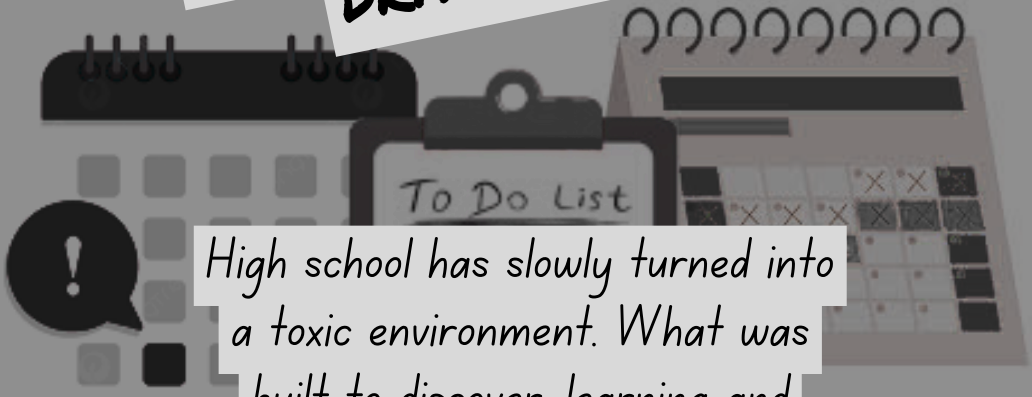


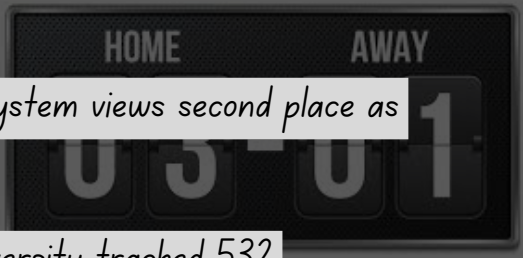
Academic Pressure Cooker

Why High School Is Draining Us



High school has slowly turned into a toxic environment. What was built to discover, learning and personal growth has been turned into a endless competition for high marks.

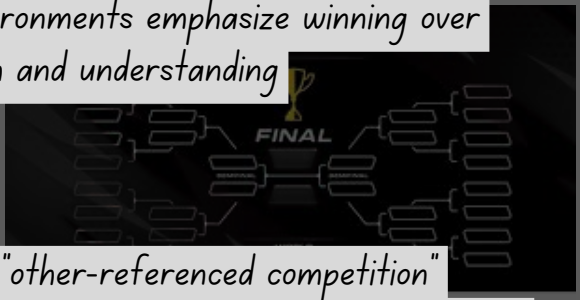
THE TOXIC LEADERBOARD



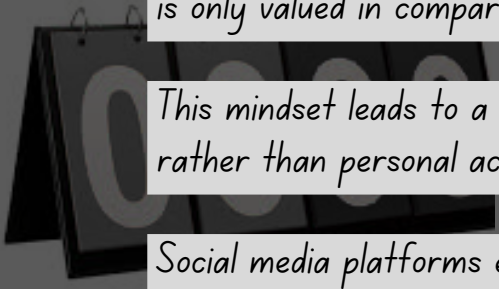
The modern education system views second place as a failure.

A study from Brock University tracked 532 teenagers in Ontario

High school environments emphasize winning over personal growth and understanding



The concept of "other-referenced competition" creates a mental trap in which one's academic work is only valued in comparison to others



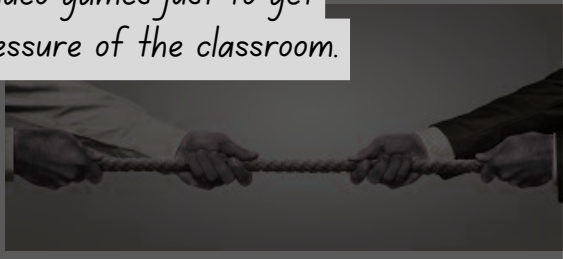
This mindset leads to a focus on outperforming peers rather than personal achievement.

Social media platforms exacerbate this cycle by transforming school life into a continuous public leaderboard, causing constant comparisons among students regarding who is succeeding or struggling.

TURNING CLASSMATES INTO ENEMIES

This unless ranking causes a fear for failure. Such overwhelming, competition and rivalry among peers has been shown to directly contribute to an increase in social exclusion, isolation, and bullying behaviour among students (Shields, Brock University repository study)

Now your classmates just see you as competition for the spots at the best university; now peer tutoring just feels like you are sacrificing your future for someone else's. This pressure makes kids hide from each other instead of working together. They hide behind their screens and video games just to get away from the intense pressure of the classroom.

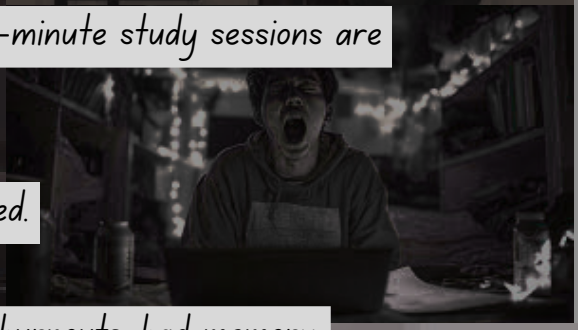


THE GRIND OF CULMINATION SEASON

Burnout is a physical and mental breaking point it is an unclear emotion. The attitude in the hallways completely changes into survival mode during the midterm and culminating seasons.

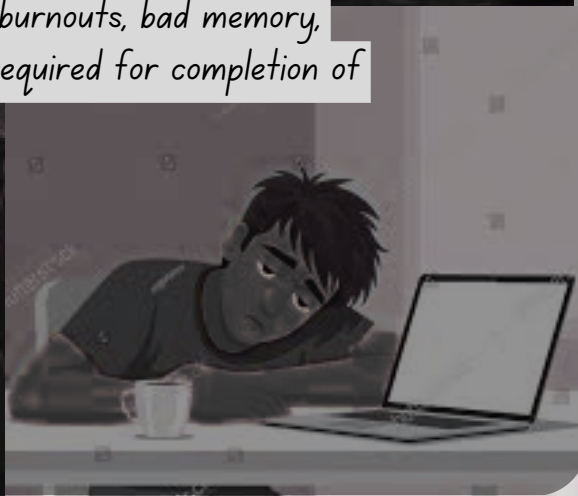
Top university programs necessitate near-perfect grade averages.Students often sacrafises their health for minimal grade improvements.

Heavy workloads and last-minute study sessions are standard.



Sleep schedules gets ruined.

Non-stop stress leads to burnouts, bad memory, focus, and energy levels required for completion of huge projects.

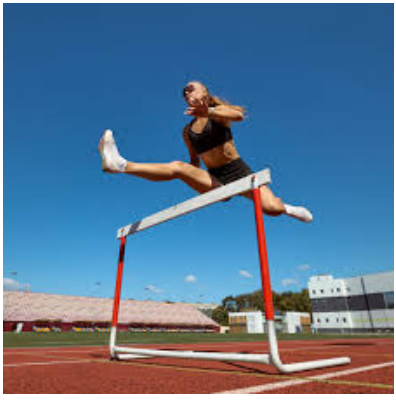


A PROVINCIAL CRISIS

The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) reported that teenagers in Ontario are dealing with rising levels of mental health issues together with struggle to manage everyday ("Ontario Youth"). The CAMH study clearly links the rising anxiety levels among teenagers to academic pressures and performance standards at school. We become trapped in a system that requires growing brains to produce good results, leaving a whole generation of children exhausted before they even complete high school.

Social isolation

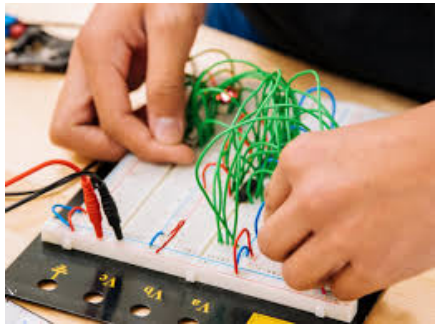
According to the Child Mind Institute's, constant consumption of mobile devices damages teen confidence through a never-ending cycle of loop comparison, overload, and a sense of social isolation (Ehmke).



Not a BREAK

Once school finishes, we naturally fall into bed and spend hours mindlessly scrolling through social media feeds. We call it a break but it negatively affects our socialization and mental health.

Screen time holds your brain in a constant, high-alert mental state. You get away from the stress of school and then enter an online space that constantly reminds you of what you don't have so your brain never really gets to rest.



Exercising to Relax

Mental recovery. Real mental recovery. It doesn't happen in an empty space. It needs a physical outlet. Or a creative one. According to a clinical report published by Harvard Health Publishing, digital screens keep you in a state of high mental alertness, but physical exercise and active hobbies give you a real chemical break

Physical activities like snowboarding, track or diving into real-life digital design and coding projects make your brain live totally in the present. As noted by Harvard Health ("Exercising to Relax"), this active exercise reduces the level of stress hormone and allows your body to release mood-elevating endorphins internally.

BREAKING THE CYCLE: THREE FIXES

Every action matters

- The 9:00 PM Screen Buffer: Shut down devices and social media by 9:00 PM to let your stress levels drop before sleep.
- The Active Escape: Dedicate three hours a week to a physical or creative hobby unrelated to school.
- Collaborate Over Compete: Share notes openly and tutor peers to transform rivals back into friends.